



# The Harbinger

AUTUMN 2016

Vol. 33, No.3

Newsletter of the

Illinois Native Plant Society

"...dedicated to the preservation, conservation, and study of native plants and vegetation in Illinois."



Shawnee National Forest

## EDITORIAL

This issue of HARBINGER covers some subjects that we have neglected in the past, namely plant life in the southern Illinois and wetland restoration. On two long visits to the Shawnee National Forest in 2014 and 2015, Susanne Masi made 73 seed collections from 57 endangered species, often in remote wilderness. Trevor Edmonson is managing a wetland restoration project in the Calumet area which promises to improve habitat and bring back large numbers of wetland birds. Elsewhere we report on a hunt for *Thismia americana* and some farmers who have discovered the virtues of prairie plants.

Victor M. Cassidy, Editor

### In This Issue

- President's Message
- Coming Events
- Seed Collecting in Shawnee
- Indian Ridge Marsh
- Bison in Illinois
- Thismia Hunt
- News



## **Governing Board**

### **President**

Chris Benda

### **Past President**

Janine Catchpole

### **President-Elect**

Paul Marcum

### **Secretary**

Rachel Goad

### **Treasurer**

Keri Shimp

### **Erigenia Editor**

Jean Sellar (interim)

### **Harbinger Editor**

Victor M. Cassidy

### **Membership**

Amanda Pankau

### **Webmaster**

Cassi Saari

## **At-Large Board**

Susanne Masi

Jean Sellar

Jason Zylka

## **Message from the President**

My term as President of the Illinois Native Plant Society is nearing the end. I have one more President's message to write before I turn the reins over to Paul Marcum. I am very excited by be succeeded by Paul, as he is a highly respected botanist and has some great ideas for advancing the goals of the organization. I want to stress that we are all in this together, and INPS thrives because of our members, sponsors, and volunteers who answer the call to run this fine organization. However, I don't want to downplay the role of the President, as someone needs to coordinate the actions of the organization, but I do want to stress that overall, this is a team effort.

Our website has been converted to wordpress recently and we are still looking for a volunteer webmaster who is experienced in HTML and web design. This individual would be added as a member on the state executive board and would be making a huge contribution to the goals of the society. Please contact me if you know anyone who might be interested.

We have launched our new listserv! If you were subscribed to the old listserv, you were automatically added to the new one. If you are not receiving messages, check you spam folder. If you are not subscribed, you can easily subscribe yourself by sending an email to [lists@lists.illinois.edu](mailto:lists@lists.illinois.edu) with the subject line: SUBSCRIBE illinoisplants. Leave the body of the message blank. If your subscription is successful, you will receive an automated email confirming your subscription. Once subscribed, you can send messages by emailing [illinoisplants@lists.illinois.edu](mailto:illinoisplants@lists.illinois.edu).

The listserv is open to everyone and is meant to be a way to share information about events, jobs, questions, observations, etc. relating to plants and conservation in Illinois (and adjacent states). Please spread the word and I encourage you to post information on the listserv. This can be a powerful tool for sharing vital information.

We have a new vision statement. This was indicated as a need by our strategic planning committee and will help us compete for grant money. "Our vision for Illinois is a thriving native flora, a public that values native habitats and advocates for native plants, and a robust array of scientific and popular publications that educate and inform about these issues." Thanks to everyone who helped craft this message.

Every day I think of 10 things INPS could be doing and with the state budget being trimmed, more and more volunteers are necessary to do the hard work of caring for the natural areas and native plants of Illinois. If you are at all interested in helping INPS, please let me know. There is a variety of potential projects that need someone to spearhead them.

I also want to let you know to SAVE THE DATE for April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Southern chapter of INPS is hosting their 5<sup>th</sup> annual Indigenous Plants Symposium at John A. Logan College in Carterville, Illinois. More information about the event will be available soon.

Thank you so much for your interest in INPS! Please spread the word and hopefully one day soon I will see you out there among the wildflowers!



Missouri Coneflower,  
*Rudbeckia missouriensis*,  
at Fults Hill Prairie Nature Preserve  
in Monroe County, Illinois.

~ Christopher David Benda



# INPS CHAPTERS

## NORTHEAST CHAPTER

### **Chicago**

Andy Olnas (President)

[northeast.inps@gmail.com](mailto:northeast.inps@gmail.com)

## QUAD CITIES CHAPTER

### **Rock Island**

Bo Dziadyk (President)

[bohndandziadyk@augustana.edu](mailto:bohndandziadyk@augustana.edu)

## GRAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER –

### **Bloomington/Normal**

Roger Anderson (President)

[rcander@illinoisstate.edu](mailto:rcander@illinoisstate.edu)

## FOREST GLEN CHAPTER

### **Danville**

Connie Cunningham (President)

[conniejcunningham@gmail.com](mailto:conniejcunningham@gmail.com)

## KANKAKEE TORRENT CHAPTER

### **Bourbonnais**

Trevor Edmondson (President)

[trevoredmondson@gmail.com](mailto:trevoredmondson@gmail.com)

## CENTRAL CHAPTER

### **Springfield**

Trish Quintenz (President)

[trishquintenz@gmail.com](mailto:trishquintenz@gmail.com)

## SOUTHERN CHAPTER

### **Carbondale**

Chris Benda (President)

[southernillinoisplants@gmail.com](mailto:southernillinoisplants@gmail.com)



## WELCOME NEW INPS MEMBERS!

### Southern

David Barfknecht

David Paddock

### Central

Keri Luly

Anne Wilhite

### Forest Glen

Betsy and Peter Kuchinke

## COMING EVENTS

*Local INPS chapters sponsor numerous wildflower walks, presentations, and workshops. Visit our website at [www.ill-inps.org](http://www.ill-inps.org) to see your local chapter events.*

**SEPT 24: NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS DAY** is a major celebration of voluntarism in public lands. Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie will have volunteer family-type activities—wild seed harvest, brush clearing, installing viewing scopes at bison overlook, and more—from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. followed by lunch. RSVP to [amcisneros@fs.fed.us](mailto:amcisneros@fs.fed.us).

**OCTOBER 18: THE ILLINOIS NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION PROGRAM (1985-1986)** Our Southern Chapter presents a lecture by John Schwegman. It starts at 6:30 p.m. in the Carbondale Township Hall in Carbondale, Illinois.



Follow the link to a video lecture of *The Natural Divisions of Southern Illinois* by John Schwegman, author of *The Natural Divisions of Illinois*. The lecture was sponsored by Tupelo Chapter of Wild Ones and Keep Carbondale Beautiful and was recorded on September 23, 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHYrHeISNco>

# Seed Collecting in the Shawnee National Forest

## Part One: What We Found

By Susanne Masi

[Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are by Domenico D'Alessandro]

Early in 2014, I was contracted to collect Regional Forester's Sensitive Species (RFSS) seed in the Shawnee National Forest as part of a joint project of the Chicago Botanic Garden's Dixon National Tallgrass Prairie Seedbank (Seedbank) and the USDA Forest Service (FS). This project, termed a Challenge Cost Share Agreement, encompassed the entire FS Eastern Region 9, but the Shawnee was my focus. I had long wanted to experience the southern part of my own state, Illinois, with its amazing diversity of unique habits, and particularly to become acquainted with its flora.

### The Project

Conservation goals outlined in the "Native Plant Conservation" seed collecting agreement with the FS are to conserve or bank the gene pool of rare species (RFSS), and to use seed as a potential source for restoration and as a foundation for adaptation to climate change. Dried frozen seed stored at – 20 degrees C can remain viable for over 200 years in the seedbank. It is periodically tested for viability and germination. "Recalcitrant" seeds (including orchids and oaks), cannot be freeze-stored over time and were eliminated from my list, as were ferns that do not bear true seed.

My task was to collect seed of RFSS and associates, following Seedbank protocols that are very specific and conservative in terms of protecting populations. For example, I took only two seeds from a very small Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) population. The project also called for photographs of habitat, plant and seed; DNA samples; and voucher herbarium specimens. I additionally recorded GPS locations and directions, population size and area, habitat designation, land use, geology, soil and slope/aspect, as well as invasive species and other threats.

A daunting 140 RFSS were on my list from the entire Region 9, of which 46 were specific to the Shawnee NF. Some populations had not been officially reported for years. We were faced with 415 square miles of FS land in ten counties. The Shawnee NF contains seven wilderness areas, and 80 natural areas (ecological, botanical or zoological), ten of which are designated Research Natural Areas. We were to visit many of these wonderful sites.

### Getting started

After preparing for several weeks at our home near Chicago, working with supportive Seedbank staff, and making contact with persons working or familiar with Southern Illinois flora, I drove seven hours with my photographer partner and husband Domenico D'Alessandro in May of 2014 to meet up with Beth Shimp, (Botanist/Research Natural Area Coordinator), my key Shawnee FS project contact.

I can't speak highly enough of the support and information that Beth provided to the project. She was our "north star of the Shawnee." Her previous work on the Biological Evaluation of Shawnee RFSS species was adapted for the seed collecting project. Over the two years that I worked with her, Beth spent many hours reviewing my list, annotating topo maps, digging out herbarium specimens, opening her files, arranging permits, and even loaning us snake gaiters and hard hats. Also, because we were new to the area, she led us to access points in virtually trail-less areas and often guided us to plants in challenging field situations.



Here's one of the many thrilling episodes in over six trips during the 2014-2015 seasons we spent collecting seed in the Shawnee National Forest. On September 10, 2014, Beth led us to the sandstone glade "pavement" not far from the Forest Service road. It was late in the season and approaching dusk, chances for finding the Illinois threatened *Phemeranthus parviflorus* (Rock Pink) seemed slim. *Sedum pulchellum* (Widow's Cross) and *Hypericum gentianoides* (Pineweed) were dry and crunchy-crackling, and even the prickly pear cactus was desiccated. The guidebook told us that the perennial Sunbright bloomed in June and July, but perhaps seed was still possible. Excitedly, Beth spotted a few of the tiny succulent plants, some still with their 5-petaled pink flowers and round tan seed capsules, growing in moss at the edges of shallow soil trapped in the cracks of the sandstone.

### The Plants

Here I describe just a few of the remarkable plants I collected and how we found them. (More are described in part II of this article.) All species are Shawnee RFSS except as noted. Specific site names are not used to protect rare plant locations.



#### *Euonymus americanus*

##### **(American Strawberry Bush; IL endangered)**

After a long hike into the heart of a hollow that he knew well from his Masters Degree studies, Jody Shimp (IDNR Natural Heritage Office of Resource Conservation. Administrator Regions 3 and 5) led us to a low shrub having the typical winged branches of the genus, with opposite, leathery leaves. Deep pink tuberculate capsules enclose five bright red-orange fruits covered by fleshy arils. The population we collected was on a steep sandstone cliff in rich moist woods above a stream. It was in full glorious seed; however, only the branches that hung out over the bluff edge bore fruits. Deer had browsed all the stems within their reach. In fact, some of the seed rain onto the terrace below from past years had germinated, and there again we only saw browsed stems. (Photo, Domenico D'Alessandro)



#### *Hottonia inflata* (Featherfoil)

This unique aquatic species is an emergent in still shallow water at the edges of swamps and ponds with its roots buried in the mud. The mature blooming plant is seen June to August. About 50 cm tall, it is notable for its inflated hollow stems divided in segments that bear five-petaled white flowers in whorls. The filiform leaves are basal, usually submersed, and deeply divided into featherlike sections. Unfortunately, we missed the mature plants; our timing only allowed us to see the tiny late summer seedlings. (Photo, Chris Benda)



***Plantago cordata* (Heart-leaved Plantain; IL endangered)**

I had unsuccessfully searched for this, my “dream” plant, in northeastern Illinois and was excited, on my first field day, to find more than 100 of them growing along the sand and gravel bars of a lovely clear stream at the base of a wooded slope. The large smooth heart-shaped leaves often float in the water and the tall inflorescence is the typical plantain spike with inconspicuous green flowers. Having missed seed that first year, we timed our 2015 trip to be able to collect seed.

(Photo, Domenico D'Alessandro)



***Trichostema dichotomum* (Blue Curls; RFSS Eastern Region).**

Karla Gage (then River to River Cooperative Weed Management Program director), who assisted on several field trips, spotted this plant. Growing, on sandstone pavement carved by a stream was a large colony of this lovely low-growing annual, much branched and sprawling, with its sky-blue flowers bearing curled pollen-bearing filaments. In August this plant was in varying stages of flower and fruit and we got a decent seed collection.

(Photo, Domenico D'Alessandro)



***Carex prasina* (Drooping Sedge, IL threatened), bottom left**

Beth led us on a long, winding downhill trail to find *Carex prasina*, growing along a clear stream near the emergence of a seep at the bottom of a wooded ravine. This lovely perennial, caespitose sedge has a culm up to 80 cm and long drooping spikes. A small population grew among ferns along the edges of the water for a span of about 25 meters. It is the only known FS location for this species, and was last officially reported in 1997. We felt honored to be there.

(Photo, Domenico D'Alessandro)



***Carex decomposita* (Cypress knee sedge, IL endangered), bottom right**

This plant lives on the stumps or swollen bases of Bald Cypress trees or on rotting fallen logs in the still water of swamps. Distinctive looking, it is tall with dense nodding inflorescences bearing black or deep olive perigynia. It is a long-lived perennial. One Missouri individual was tracked to 28 years of age. (Photo, Domenico D'Alessandro)



## The Places

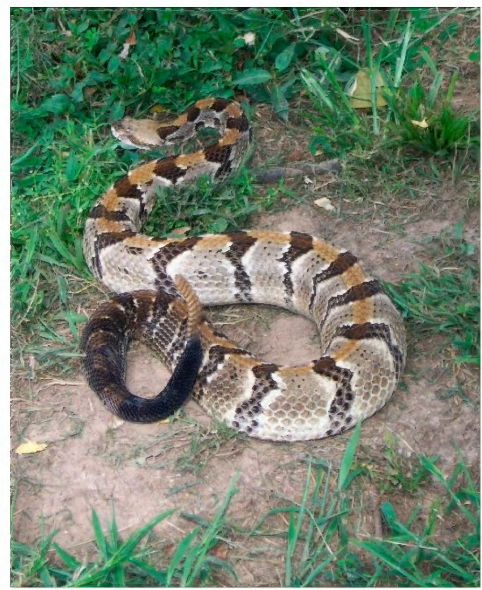
Altogether, we visited 43 sites in 2014 and 2015 and on additional trips we made in conjunction with conferences. We made many forays in the company of those who knew the area well and could not have found some sites without their assistance. As we rode through the beautiful countryside with our guides, they talked about the culture, work, harrowing escapes, local politics - you name it. Among the lovely places we visited were Rose Ford on Lusk Creek, Copperous Branch Limestone Barrens, Dean Cemetery East Barrens, Kaskaskia Experimental Forest, Pleasant Valley Barrens, Bell Smith Springs, Gyp Williams Hollow, Whoopie Cat Mountain, Panther Hollow, and Garden of the Gods

Bob Edgin (IL Nature Preserves Commission, Nature Preserve Area 8), had conducted several surveys for the FS more than 10 years ago, and he agreed to lead us on a field trip in 2014. With his help, we found our way into the Grantsburg Swamp which is visible from the road but otherwise impenetrable. With Bob as our guide, we followed his GPS records, found the barely visible road turnout at the edge of the swamp, and descended a rocky slope into the botanically diverse rich muck surrounding the actual swamp. Bob's precise records led us to the three groupings of RFSS plants he had surveyed in 2002. While there, we observed several other species on our list – a real treasure trove.

I must mention LaRue Pine Hills-Otter Pond Research Natural Area, which is also a National Natural Landmark and where we made several collections, often with the assistance of Jean Sellar (Illinois Native Plant Society). It is a dramatic landscape of limestone cliffs overlooking the Mississippi River, native pine and oak forest, and rich swampland. This “area contains more plant species [ $>1200$ ] than any other site of comparable size and is considered to be one of the most outstanding natural areas in the Midwest” (Forest Service Website). Significant mammals include the Indiana Bat and the Eastern Wood Rat. Its Snake Road is also a prime herper's destination, and there we got up close to three beautiful poisonous snakes – Eastern Cottonmouth, Timber Rattlesnake and Copperhead.



**Copperhead** (Photo, Chris Benda)



**Timber Rattlesnake** (Photo, Chris Benda)

Over two memorable years I made 73 seed collections (24 RFSS, 14 RFSS Eastern Region, and 19 associate species) representing 57 different species. Many more species and locations were documented, although seed collection for these was not possible due to circumstances. All collections and finds were reported to the FS, the Seedbank, and, where state listed, to the Illinois Natural Heritage Database.



## INDIAN RIDGE MARSH: A WETLAND RESTORATION

The 20-square-mile Calumet region of southeastern Chicago is one of the most polluted areas in Illinois. Heavy manufacturing, dumping of industrial wastes, dredging, land filling, and railway and road construction have permanently altered what was once an area of shallow glacial lakes, marshes, and ridge and swale complexes. In times past, Calumet was habitat for large numbers of waterfowl. Birds nested year-round and migrants visited in spring and fall.

In 2011, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers started restoration at the entire Indian Ridge Marsh (IRM), except for a 25-acre area at its north end. This area was set aside for restoration work due to the presence of a dense stand of *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) that was being used by Black-Crowned Night Herons for nesting.

The Corps' restoration efforts ended in January of 2015. During the four-year (2011-2015) period, the Black-Crowned Night Herons moved out, creating an opportunity to restore the 25 acres that had been set aside. That work is now being done by The Wetlands Initiative and Audubon with assistance from the Chicago Park District that took over the site from the City of Chicago in January of 2016. Trevor Edmonson of the Wetlands Initiative is project manager.



### **Hemi-Marsh Habitat**

As Edmonson tells it, IRM is a hemi-marsh, a habitat with permanent standing water that features an open mix of emergent or floating plants like cattails (*Typha spp.*) and white water lilies (*Nymphaea odorata*), and submersed vegetation like sago pondweed (*Stuckenia pectinata*).



“The interspersed of open water found in a hemi-marsh offers many places for many birds and wildlife to feed, nest, and hide,” he continues. “Several State threatened or endangered bird species including the Common Gallinule, Pied-Billed Grebe, and King Rail rely on this habitat for cover and breeding.” At one time, 800 Black-Crowned Night Herons nested in IRM, but Edmonson has seen no more than one or two herons on many visits to the site. He’s hoping that restoration will bring them back.

“Healthy hemi-marshes are characterized by dynamic water levels that vary seasonally, both within and among years,” says Gary Sullivan, senior ecologist at The Wetlands Initiative. “Natural water level fluctuations no longer occur at most Calumet sites, but could be managed to simulate more natural rhythms and allow marsh vegetation to reestablish, expand, and thrive.”

### **What Restoration Will Do**

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, restoration will improve existing aquatic, woodland, and wetland areas by removing invasive plants and rubbish. Restoration targets will include hemi-marsh, marsh, sedge meadow, and wet and mesic prairie. The area under restoration will include some oaks, but not enough to develop into savanna habitat. It is possible that the northwest corner of the site will develop into a shrub wetland, but that is not a specific project goal.

If you seek an enchanting wilderness experience, don’t visit the 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Torrance Avenue entrance to Indian Ridge Marsh. It’s a fenced area with NO TRESPASSING signs everywhere and some old tires dumped by the side of a muddy road. (There are two accessible parking areas with trails—one at the north end off Torrance Avenue and the other at the south end off 122<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Entering a gate that had been left open, I saw a wall of *Phragmites australis* in the open-water marsh. On the ground there was a heap of broken blacktop pavement, lots of Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), and other vegetation.

According to Edmonson, the site looks better than it did in spring, but there’s much more work ahead. “Several hundred piles have been removed from IRM,” he stated, “and burned-out cars. There’s a burned-out house on the site that we’ve been working around.”

“Step Number One is to control invasives,” he continues. “We used a helicopter to spray herbicide on the phragmites—how else to get it out of standing water? We’re also spraying the Purple Loosestrife. “Where the ground is still wet, we can uproot invasives.”

The next step is to plant natives in the standing water: native cattail, sedges (*Carex spp.*), bulrush (*Scirpius spp.*), and spike rushes (*Eleocharis spp.*). The Wetlands Initiative will do this by measuring water depth from a rowboat, find sandbars, and plant there. They want to keep the water level lower to help with the establishment of the plantings.

It’s too late in the season to plant now, Edmonson continues. There will be fire in fall and winter—and he will start planting natives in spring of 2017. Fire will expose the ground and plants may grow from the seed bank. He doesn’t know what’s there, but IRM was one place where *Thismia Americana* was last seen one hundred years ago—and he wouldn’t mind finding a few.

As always, restoration is a step into the unknown. “We’ll do our best,” says Edmonson. “We can’t be sure what the marsh will look a few years from now, but we feel we have a sound plan.”



# BISON: TWO HERDS, TWO STORIES



We now have two bison herds in the Chicago area—and a third may arrive soon at Kankakee Sands. The first came to Nachusa Grasslands in autumn of 2014 and presently numbers about 75 animals. One year later, a smaller herd, now grown to 25 animals, arrived at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

## Nachusa's Herd

The Nature Conservancy purchased the core of today's 3,000-acre Nachusa Grasslands in 1986. Since that time, Nachusa staff and many volunteers have restored more than 150 prairies on the site. Roughly three years ago, Nachusa decided to take the next step in restoration and prepared the site for the reintroduction of bison. (We thank the Nature Conservancy for loaning us the Infographic that illustrates this article.)

According to Preserve Director Bill Kleiman, site management considered bringing in cattle, but chose bison "because the animal is well-adapted to our climate . . . bison can stand in an Illinois snowstorm and keep grazing. They give birth without aid and only require water and an occasional mineral supplement."

Visitors to Nachusa now see "grazing patches at random throughout the prairie instead of an undisturbed sea of grass," Kleiman continues. The animals "maintain patches of season-long 'grazing lawns' that won't burn during prescribed fires because the grass is too short. Over time this will create a random mosaic of grazing patches that will promote a wide diversity of plants and animals." Bison dung attracts certain beetles that ornate box turtles like to eat.

Prairie bush clover (*Lespedeza leptostachya*) is an endangered plant that grows at Nachusa and Kleiman hopes for a population increase because the plant is said to require grazing disturbance to thrive. He also hopes to see the upland sandpiper return because it prefers grazed areas.



## What happened at Midewin

Bill Glass, Midewin ecologist, and Kelly Gutknecht, range management specialist, explained that Midewin was concerned about introducing bison, although the idea had been discussed for more than 20 years. It could have been because Yellowstone Park had some bad experiences with large animals like Bison and biologists at Midewin were focused on restoration. Nothing happened until about five years ago when the National Forest Foundation, a non-profit organization that Congress set up to help the forests got interested in Midewin, designated it a “Treasured Landscape” and had a Board Meeting there. An anonymous donor wanted a bison herd and offered to fund it.

“I’m sure he donated close to a million dollars,” says Glass. “We built nine miles of fence that cost between \$300,000 and \$400,000. The sorting chutes and corrals were a couple of hundred thousand and we had to do an environmental assessment for \$100,000. The Forest Service did not have that kind of money, but once the donor appeared, we moved ahead.”

Glass explained that bison are “graminoids who eat grasses, sedges, and a few other things. They don’t care whether the grass they eat is native or not.” This was just as well because cattle had been grazing the unrestored pastures where the bison went. Everything happened so fast that there was no time to plant native grasses in the bison pastures.

“During the winter, grass quality goes down,” says Glass. “If necessary, we supplement the herd’s diet with hay, also a high protein material like salt. Bison have a different digestive tract than cattle and can get more protein nutrients out of grass than cows can so supplement feeding is not usually needed. However, females are pregnant in winter supplement feeding can be helpful so the young survive. We want to build up the herd.”

When Midewin knew that the bison were coming, it looked at four or five pasture sites and chose one that was large, wide open, close to the road so the public could see the herd and visit it--and near the office so staff could keep an eye on the animals. There are actually three bison pastures of different size and Midewin can move the animals around to graze fresh grass or be viewed by the public on special occasions. Glass does not think that the land can carry as many bison as cattle.

### “Plus-Minus Thing”

“Bison wallows are a plus-minus thing,” says Glass. They destroy the ground cover, leaving a big bare soil area, but this is a place where certain species of plants can get established without competition from tall grasses. In presettlement times, the huge herds in the Midwest made trails called buffalo traces to reach salt licks—and there are endangered plants such as Short’s goldenrod (*Solidago shortii*) that are found primarily on the old buffalo traces, suggesting that they may need a disturbance for survival.

Kelly Gutknecht visits the bison (“my family”) on a daily basis. She walks up to them, looks for injuries, and makes sure that all are healthy. The public is never allowed to interact in this way with the herd.

The jury is still out on whether the bison will transform Midewin such that grassland birds will thrive there. “We see the herd as an experiment,” says Glass, “and I’ll be long retired before all the results are in.”



## THE GREAT THISMIA HUNT (CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR)



On August 21, some twenty people gathered at Indian Ridge Marsh in the Calumet region of southeastern Chicago to hunt for *Thismia Americana*, the white or pink-flowered fingernail-sized plant with delicately colored blue-green leaves that was last seen a century ago. According to Nigel Pitman and Cassandra Kelsey of the Field Museum, botanist Norma Pfeiffer was exploring a wet prairie in southern Chicago during August of 1912 when she spotted a tiny flower peeking out of the soil. The mysterious plant proved to be an undescribed species of a mostly tropical genus of saprophyte that has no leaves or chlorophyll but draws its energy from rotting plant matter.

Pfeiffer studied the plant until 1916—and then it vanished. Despite repeated searches, it has not been found for one hundred years and some people think that it's extinct. Those who disagree--Robb Telfer of the Field Museum, Trevor Edmonson, project manager for the Indian Ridge Marsh restoration, and Forest Cortez of the Chicago Park District--organized the Great Thismia Hunt.

Telfer handed out a FIND THISMIA guide which stated that *Thismia Americana* has only been found between early July and mid-September, when it flowers and fruits. Its habitat is low prairie; plant associates include *Solidago gigantea*, *Euthamia graminifolia*, *Rudbeckia hirta*, *Eupatorium perfoliatum*, *Asclepias incarnata*, *Iris versicolor* var. *shnrevei*, and *Acorus calamus*. Where to look? "Honestly," says the guide, "Your guess is as good as ours." Since Pfeiffer's time, the low prairies that supported the plant have mostly yielded to industry so the hunt was held at Indian Ridge Marsh preserve.

"Wherever you look," the FIND THISMIA guide concludes, you'll want to get down on your hands and knees, under the prairie plants, so you can scan the soil, humus, leaf litter, and moss beds." Though no plants were found, the ever-optimistic hunters chanted a familiar Chicago slogan: "Wait Till Next Year!"



## PRAIRIE PLANTS FINALLY GET SOME RESPECT (FROM FARMERS)

According to the *Chicago Tribune* (August 12, 2016), some Iowa farmers are planting strips of native grasses and forbs in soybean fields because they have discovered that these deep-rooted plants hold moisture in the soil, prevent water pollution, and enrich the soil. Iowa farmers are said to lose about \$40 per acre to pollution each year.

Lisa Schulte Moore, a professor at Iowa State University tells farmers (who will listen) that native plantings can reduce the massive nutrient runoffs that end up in the Mississippi River and ultimately in the Gulf of Mexico. She's helping to lead a new program called STRIPS (Science-based Trials of Rowcrops Integrated with Prairie Strips) that benefits the land and provides habitat for wild birds and animals on the decline. Farmers are skeptical as are some conservation professionals. The jury's still out, but it's heartening to hear something good being said about native plants.

That's not all! **Houzz**, a home decorating and gardening site on the Internet, has discovered that prairie plants help migrating monarch butterflies. **Houzz** encourages readers to plant rough blazing star (*Liatris aspera*), meadow blazing star (*Liatris lintgulistylis*), smooth aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*), New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*), stiff goldenrod (*Oligoneuron rigidum*), and zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*).

## THIRTY NEW PLANT SPECIES FOUND (IN PERU)

We're not the only folks who monitor and inventory native plants in natural areas. Your editor recently heard to a presentation by Diana "Tita" Alvira of the Keller Science Action Center at the Field Museum of Natural History. With enthusiastic backing from the Peruvian government and much assistance from locals, the Center has done rapid inventories of vast forests in the Amazon basin and Andean foothills.

As Alvira tells it, the forests are "seriously threatened and there is often little time available to gather the information that's crucial to keeping them intact. A rapid inventory puts compelling scientific data into the hands of decision makers fast, for quick action, and solid conservation results." The scientists spend weeks in the field collecting plants and recording data, often working in impossible weather as they suffer exotic illnesses.

The 3,343,805 acre Cordillera Azul is now protected as a result of the rapid assessment program. According to Alvira, "our rapid inventory yielded stunning results: the identification of 30 species new to science, a protected area larger than the state of Connecticut, and close to 300,000 people benefiting from the new national park."

Peru's president established the park just nine months after the inventory. Collaboration with Peruvian partners has since resulted in successful programs for managing the park, quality of life plans for neighboring villagers, and a system for monitoring conservation.



ILLINOIS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 271  
Carbondale, IL 62903



[illinoisplants@gmail.com](mailto:illinoisplants@gmail.com)

[www.ill-inps.org](http://www.ill-inps.org)



*Dodecatheon frenchii* –  
French's Shooting Star

---

---

---

## 2016 Autumn Harbinger September 2016

You can renew/join by filling out the form below or online at our website,  
[www.ill-inps.org/member](http://www.ill-inps.org/member)

Please become a member and support this local non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation, and study of the native plants and vegetation of Illinois!!!



### Join us!

- ☐ New member
- ☐ Renewal
- ☐ Address Change only

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss/Dr. \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Year \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check here if you need to receive newsletters by postal mail\*

### Membership Categories

- ☐ Student.....\$13.00
- ☐ Individual.....\$20.00
- ☐ Family (new category).....\$30.00
- ☐ Institutional (nonvoting).....\$20.00
- ☐ Supporting.....\$30.00
- ☐ Patron.....\$55.00
- ☐ Life.....\$300.00

### Chapter Affiliation

- ☐ Central (Springfield)
- ☐ Forest Glen (Westville)
- ☐ Northeast (Chicago)
- ☐ Southern (Carbondale)
- ☐ Quad City (Rock Island)
- ☐ Irene Cull (Peoria)

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:  
ILLINOIS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

P.O. Box 271  
Carbondale, IL 62903



**GO GREEN!** If you are receiving a black and white newsletter by postal mail, please help us lower our costs by signing up for an electronic copy in color. Please send your email address to [illinoisplants@gmail.com](mailto:illinoisplants@gmail.com) to be added to our email distribution list. Please "like" us on facebook at [www.facebook.com/illinoisplants](http://www.facebook.com/illinoisplants).